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EXHIBIT 9  
DATE 2.9.07  
HB 465

Missoula City-County Health Department  
Health Services  
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February 8, 2007

The Honorable Rick Jore, Chairman  
House Education Committee  
Montana House of Representatives  
PO Box 200400  
Helena, MT 59620-0400

Dear Representative Jore,

I am respectfully submitting this letter in strong opposition to HB 465. I have been a Registered Nurse for 21 years, and am currently working as a Public Health Nursing Supervisor at the Missoula City County Health Department. In this position I oversee the immunization clinic and am actively involved in communicable disease prevention and education within our community.

Previous to my employment at the Health Department I worked for many years as a pediatric nurse, and have seen first hand the devastating effects of disease in children. At that time, most children were immunized against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus and polio. However, Hepatitis B, Hib and Varicella (chicken pox) vaccines were relatively new and not yet in widespread use.

During my work as a pediatric nurse, I had the heartbreaking experience of caring for an immunosuppressed teenager who had contracted chicken pox from his younger sibling, who had not been immunized. After an agonizing week in the ICU, he finally succumbed to overwhelming varicella disease, which had attacked his respiratory tract, lungs and internal organs.

There is no doubt that immunization can prevent this type of illness and death, and the Center's for Disease Control has many statistics to illustrate this point. For instance, before Hib (Haemophilus influenzae b) vaccination was introduced in 1990, Hib disease was the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children under age 5. The CDC reports that out of the 20,000 cases of Hib disease reported annually in the U.S., approximately 5% of children died, and 35% of children who survived suffered serious complications such as mental retardation, deafness, seizures, and neurological problems.

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By 1993, 3 years after the vaccine was introduced, the CDC reported a remarkable 95% reduction in Hib disease in the U.S. By 1998, only 125 cases of Hib disease were reported.

Examples like this can be repeated for nearly every vaccine in the United States. Measles dropped from 319,000 cases and 468 deaths in 1950, to 56 cases and no deaths in 2003. Polio cases dropped from 33,000 cases and 1900 deaths in 1950, to no cases and no deaths in 1999.

Some may consider it a parental right to not immunize their children, but I feel it is a dangerous disservice to children who can not yet decide such things for themselves, as well as to other children who are too young to be fully immunized or who are immunosuppressed.

As you know, very young children are virtually incapable of practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene, and diseases are easily spread through child care facilities and schools.

I feel HB 465 would take us a step backward instead of forward. Allowing unimmunized children in day cares and schools would risk not only the children's health, but would require inordinate amounts of time, energy and money in tracking and treating other exposed children, and would increase hospitalizations of sick children.

Our children need our full commitment to their health and safety. Thank you for considering these points when making your decision regarding this bill. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or need further information.

Sincerely,

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cc: Members, House Education Committee